Reviewer's report

Title: TV viewing and food preferences and food habits among children: A prospective epidemiological study

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Reviewer: Giovanna Fiates

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Major compulsory revisions

1. This study attempts to investigate the cross-sectional associations between TV viewing habits and food preferences, and food habits, respectively; and whether TV viewing habits, and changes in TV viewing habits over the following 6 years were associated with 6-year changes in food preferences, and food habits, respectively.

2. Regarding the title, I suggest modifying it to: Television viewing, food preferences and food habits among children: A prospective epidemiological study.

3. The abstract needs to be rewritten after incorporation of modifications in the body of the manuscript.

3. Background

- The expression “dietary habits” appears 5 times; it differs from the concept mentioned in the title (food habits). Authors must choose between dietary / food habits and use the same expression throughout the whole manuscript.
- Also, definitions of dietary / food habits and food preferences are not given.
- In the second paragraph, mentioned references do not address the issue – please update them.
- Third paragraph contains the affirmation “…however, most studies have focused on the effect of advertisements on different aspects of food preferences [11-13], and not on TV viewing habits and their influence on development of food preferences and habits.” I question such statement; authors should include more solid evidence to support such a strong view.
- The same applies to the fourth paragraph: authors need to include references
supporting the affirmation that “Nevertheless, the relation between TV viewing habits and food preferences has received limited attention”. To my knowledge, there is a considerable number of papers addressing precisely this relation.

4. Method:
- In order to be comprehensible, the subjects section should mention the exact number of individuals separately by phase of the study (98/98 and 2003/04).
- Alleged motifs for dropouts are not related do the manuscript’s objectives, kind of incomprehensible.
- When explaining how food preferences and food habits were measured, score values of what was considered high and low should be mentioned.
- In the covariates section, body weight, height and BMI are said to have been measured, but no mention of these variables is to be found in the results section (only in tables), and they are not discussed either. Therefore, I suggest excluding weight, height and BMI from the methods section and the tables where they appear.
- BMI of the parents should also be excluded, since it is not included in the results section.
- Another covariate presented is physical activity. It is unclear to me why it is mentioned in the method, since it is neither presented nor discussed as a result.
- The socioeconomic status (SES) was based on questionnaire information about maternal education. What reference supports this decision?
- In the last paragraph of the statistical analyses section, authors mention that the 24h recall method provides valid data on habitual dietary intake on the group level. Please indicate reference supporting this affirmation.

5. Results
- Number of children presented in the first paragraph differs from the method section. Please specify how many children belong to the 97/98 phase (divided by age group) and how many belong to the 2003/04 phase (also divided by age group).
- This section presents results regarding TV viewing habits, food habits, food preferences and 24-hour recall. It does not include results from BMI, physical activity, glycaemic index, parental BMI – but these appear in the tables. Please decide if you will incorporate the information throughout the paper or exclude it from the tables.
- Also, significance values are only presented in the first paragraph of the section. Please include more values or exclude from the first paragraph in order to make the text uniform.
- Text about food preferences is rather confusing. E.G.: “Among girls, more than 2 hours of TV viewing per day at age 8–10 years was associated with a significant 6-year decrease in #HFP compared to less than 1 hour of TV viewing per day at age 8–10 years. The 6-year change in TV viewing (h/day) was not associated with the 6-year change in #HFP. No associations between either
baseline TV viewing (h/day) or the 6-year change in TV viewing (h/day) and the 6-year change in #HFP was observed among boys, table 4. Please rewrite.

6. Discussion
- Authors digress about parental control, which was not investigated. Authors do not have evidence to support the affirmation that “The 14–16-year-olds are likely to experience less parental control of their eating habits than the 8–10-year-olds, which may contribute to the observed stronger correlation in this age group.” Please direct your discussion towards another point of view.
- Since physical activity measurements were not mentioned in the results, it should not be considered a limitation.

7. Conclusion
- Please review the use of the expression “in the long run”, since it is rather colloquial. Please use a more specific expression.

8. Tables
- Please exclude data which are not presented in the results section.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests